DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 206 UD 033 427

AUTHOR	Staub, Debbie
TITLE	On Inclusion and the Other Kids: Here's What Research Shows So Far about Inclusion's Effect on Nondisabled Students. On Point...Brief Discussions of Critical Issues in Urban Education.
INSTITUTION	Education Development Center, Newton, MA. National Inst. for Urban School Improvement.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	11p.; Reprinted from "Learning," September/October 1996 by permission of the Education Center, Inc.
CONTRACT	H086C70005
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.edc.org/urban.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Disabilities; Elementary Education; *Inclusive Schools; *Mainstreaming; Regular and Special Education Relationship

ABSTRACT

Only a few studies have addressed the question of whether the learning of nondisabled students will suffer in inclusive classrooms. Surveys of parents and teachers generally say that they see no harm to the nondisabled children. Only one study has addressed the issue of whether nondisabled students will receive less attention from their teachers, and it found that the presence of students with severe disabilities had no effect on the amount of instructional time. Research so far shows that being in an inclusive classroom does not hurt nondisabled students, and a growing body of research indicates that nondisabled students can gain a number of important benefits from relationships with their disabled classmates. Friendship, social skills, self-esteem, personal principles, patience, and an increased comfort level with people who are different are some of the benefits students may receive in the inclusive classroom. Teachers and administrators can support these benefits if they create classrooms that foster kindness, consideration, empathy, concern, and care for others. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 206

Brief discussions of critical issues in Urban Education

On Inclusion and the Other Kids:

Here's What Research Shows so Far About Inclusion's Effect on *Non*disabled Students.

Debbie Staub

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR URBAN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

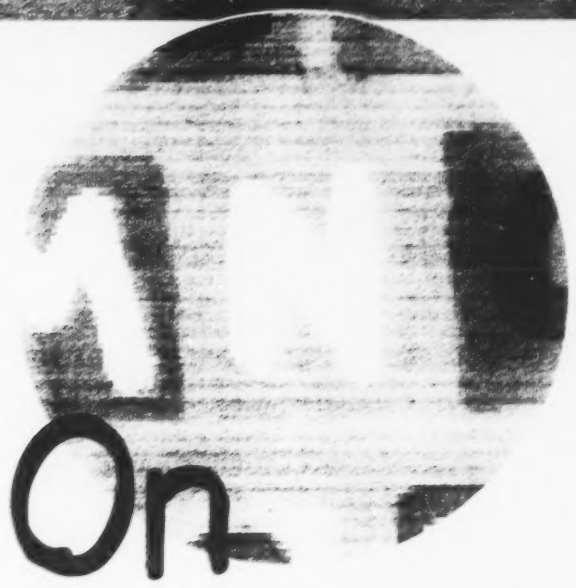
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD033427

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Inclusion and the *Other* Kids:

Here's What Research Shows so Far About Inclusion's Effect on Nondisabled Students*

Inclusion is receiving lots of attention, both in school districts across the country and in the popular media. Most of that attention is focused on how inclusion affects the students with disabilities. But what about the students who *don't* have disabilities?

As a project coordinator for the Inclusive Education Research Group at Emily Dickinson School in Redmond, Washington, I've been in contact with hundreds of teachers, parents, and students affected by inclusion, and together with colleagues I've done extensive research on the subject. Of course, each inclusion situation is unique: some teachers receive more training than others, some schools provide classroom aides and others don't, some classrooms have one disabled student while others have several, and so forth. Regardless of the circumstances, though, I've found that teachers and parents usually want to know what the research says about these ***two main concerns:***

This article is from the September/October 1996 issue of Learning® and reprinted by permission of The Education Center, Inc.

1. Will the nondisabled students' learning suffer because of inclusion?

Only a few studies have addressed this question. So far these studies have shown no slowdown in nondisabled children's learning in inclusive classrooms. Surveys conducted with parents and teachers involved in inclusive settings generally show that they see no harm to the nondisabled children and that they have positive opinions about inclusion. In fact, one survey of more than 300 parents of elementary-age children shows that 89 percent would enroll their children in an inclusive classroom again.

2. Will nondisabled children receive less attention and time from their teacher?

Only one study has directly investigated this issue. In that study, researchers randomly chose six nondisabled students in classrooms that had at least one student with severe disabilities (all of the classrooms had support from paraprofessionals). Then they chose a comparison group of nondisabled students in noninclusive classrooms. The researchers compared the amounts of instructional time and found that the presence of students with severe disabilities had no effect. And, time lost to interruptions wasn't significantly different either.

The glass is half full

So in a nutshell, the research conducted thus far shows that being in an inclusive classroom doesn't *hurt* the nondisabled students. But does it *help* them? Even to ask this question shows how far our research on social outcomes for children with and without disabilities has shifted focus over the last decade. The 1980s saw a lot of published research on the benefits of social interactions with nondisabled peers for children and youth with disabilities. However, the end of the decade saw the beginnings of a line of research that has explored the potential benefits of social interactions with peers with disabilities for non-labeled students attending inclusive school settings (Murray-Seegert, 1989). Most recently, the results of a major five

year national research project have helped summarize how far our knowledge has grown over the last ten years (Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz & Harry, 1998) This growing body of research suggests that nondisabled students can gain a number of important benefits from relationships with their disabled classmates.

Friendships

One of the most important functions of friendships is to make people feel loved, safe, and cared for. Researchers have documented cases in which meaningful, long-lasting friendships that benefit both students have emerged between disabled and nondisabled students. For example, one study chronicles the friendship that Stacy, a nondisabled 12-year-old, and Cary, a 13-year-old with Down syndrome, have had for more than four years. A teaching assistant explains how she sees Stacy benefit from this relationship: "Stacy sees the growth Cary is making, and she is a big part of that success. She also benefits because Cary makes her feel good-always choosing to sit with her, always goofing around with her."

The experience of Stacy and Cary illustrates the importance of reciprocity as an essential component of friendships between students with and without disabilities. Of course, most of us would agree with researchers who have long identified a mutuality of affection or esteem as a key feature of enduring friendships (Mannarino, 1980). However, recent research (Grenot-Scheyer, Staub, Peck and Schwartz, 1998; Staub 1998) has helped us to identify three specific areas of mutual benefit for children with and without disabilities who are friends with each other: (1) warm and caring companionship; (2) growth in social cognition and self-concept; and (3) the development of personal principles.

Of course, inclusive settings do not mean that all nondisabled children become close friends with children with disabilities. However, even when relationships remain at the level of 'classmate' or 'familiar acquaintance', versions of these same benefits have been reported in surveys of teachers and other research.

Social skills

Nondisabled children can often become more aware of the needs of others, and they become skilled at understanding and reacting to the behaviors of their friends with disabilities.

Self-esteem

One study documents the friendship between Aaron, a nondisabled sixth grader, and Cole, a classmate with severe disabilities. Aaron's ability to understand Cole's behavior has helped him take on a leadership role that he wasn't able to assume in the past, resulting in an increase in Aaron's self-esteem. "This has given Aaron a special place in the classroom, and he feels really good about himself," his teacher says.

Personal principles

Nondisabled students grow in their commitment to their own moral and ethical principles and become advocates for their disabled friends. For example, Cary's classmate became very vocal about making sure that she wasn't pulled out of the class unnecessarily. Developing these strong personal principles will benefit students throughout adulthood.

Comfort level with people who are different

On surveys and in interviews, nondisabled middle and high school students say they are less fearful of people who look different or behave differently because they've interacted with individuals with disabilities. One seventh grader says, "Now I'm not like, 'Uh, she's weird.' She's normal!" I've gotten to work with people with disabilities, so I know that." Parents notice the differences in their children, too. An interesting side effect is that these parents report that they feel more comfortable with people with disabilities because of their children's experiences.

Patience

Nondisabled students who have developed relationships with disabled classmates report that they have increased patience with "slower" learners.

Getting the pay off

So how do teachers and administrators realize these powerful benefits with their nondisabled students? What techniques and practices can work? The research that my colleagues and I have done (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 1998) found that perhaps the single most common feature shared by students in reciprocal relationships was membership in a caring school community (Noddings, 1991) that promoted prosocial development (Schaps & Solomon, 1990). Within a caring classroom, students have opportunities to learn about their classmates in ways that honor the full range of experiences and differences that each child brings to the classroom. Furthermore, schools and classrooms can be structured to facilitate kindness, consideration, empathy, and compassion for others.

Some teachers and administrators are surprised to learn that techniques many of them are already using can contribute to the creation of such an educational community.

Create schools and classrooms that foster kindness, consideration, empathy, concern, and care for others

Support this kind of atmosphere with these practices:

- Hold both schoolwide and classroom meetings in which students can express themselves and their perceptions of how things are going.
- Use cooperative learning.
- Plan ahead to make sure all students are included in free-time activities.
- Teach social skills such as how to communicate clearly, resolve conflicts, and solve problems. Also be sure that these same skills are goals for students with disabilities as well.

Celebrate the experiences and differences that each child brings to the school and classroom.

Educators can do this in a variety of ways:

- Model acceptance of diverse abilities, backgrounds and behaviors.
- Be careful to include all students in class and school activities.
- Establish buddy and peer-tutoring programs.

ONE CAUTION: Be aware of how often you ask or just expect nondisabled students to assume helping roles. True friendships are more likely to grow when children cooperate and interact often and of their own choosing.

Down the road

We have learned much about the importance of relationships in the lives of children, the impact that friendship experiences have on the learning and development of children with and without disabilities, and factors that may affect the development of friendships and other positive social relationships. However, there still remains a lot to understand about the effects of these relationships on children over time and how best to facilitate the most positive outcomes of these social experiences for all the children involved.

The research conducted so far points us in the right direction for improving the inclusion experience. Yet, each question we answer leads to more to explore. These questions can be challenging to study because inclusion situations vary. We've just begun to discover the effects of inclusion on *all* students-disabled and nondisabled alike.

Sources:

Grenot-Scheyer, M., Staub, D., Peck, C.A. & Schwartz, I.S. (1998). Reciprocity and friendships: Listening to the voices of children and youth with and without disabilities. In L.H. Meyer, H.S. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I.S. Schwartz & B. Harry (Eds.), Making friends: The influences of culture and development. (pp. 149-167). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Helmstetter, E., Peck, C. & Giangreco, M. F. (1993). Outcomes of interactions with peers with moderate or severe disabilities: A statewide survey of high school students. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19,* (4), 263-276.

Hollowood, T.M., Salisbury, C.L., Rainforth, B. & Palombaro, M.M. (1994/95) Use of instructional time in classrooms serving students with and without severe disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 61*(3), 242-253.

Hunt, P., Staub, D., Alwell, M. & Goetz, L. (1994) Achievement by all students within the context of cooperative learning groups. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19*(4),

Mannarino, A.P. (1980). The development of children's friendships. In H.C. Foot, A.J. Chapman, & J.R. Smith (Eds.), Friendships and social relations in children (pp. 45-63). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Murray-Seegert, C. (1989). Nasty girls, thugs, and humans like us: Social relations between severely disabled and nondisabled students in high school. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Noddings, N. (1991). Stories in dialogue: Caring and interpersonal reasoning. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education (pp. 157-170). New York: Teachers College Press.

Odom, S.L., Deklyen, M., & Jenkins, J.R. (1984). Integrating handicapped and nonhandicapped preschoolers: Developmental impact on nonhandicapped children. *Exceptional Children, 51,*(1), 41-48.

Peck, C.A., Carlson, P., & Helmstetter, E. (1992). Parent and teacher perceptions of outcomes for typically developing children enrolled in integrated early childhood programs: A statewide survey. *Journal of Early Intervention, 16,* 53-63.

Peck, C.A., Donaldson, J., & Pezzoli, M. (1990). Some benefit adolescents perceive for themselves from their social relationships with peers who have severe handicaps. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps,15,* 4, 241-249.

Schaps, E. & Solomon, D. (1990). Schools and classrooms as caring communities. Educational Leadership, 48 (3), 38-42.

Staub, D. (1995). *Perceived outcomes of inclusive education: What do parents of typically developing children think?* Presented to The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH), Atlanta, GA. December.

Staub, D. (1998). Delicate threads: Friendships between children with and without special needs in inclusive settings. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House

Staub, D. & Peck, C.A. (1994/95). What are the outcomes for nondisabled students? *Educational Leadership, 52* (4), 36-40.

Staub, D., Schwartz, I.S., Gallucci, C., & Peck, C. (1994). Four portraits of friendship at an inclusive school. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19* (4), 314-325.

York, J., Vandercook, T., MacDonald, C., Heise-Neff, C., & Caughey, E. (1992). Feedback about integrating middle-school education students with severe disabilities in general education classes. *Exceptional Children, 58,* (3), 244-258.

About the Author:

Debbie Staub serves as a Social Work and Education Coordinator for the Casey Family Program in Seattle, Washington. She is also affiliated with the University of Washington as a part-time Lecturer.

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special Education Programs

On Points may be reproduced for broad dissemination and can be accessed in English or Spanish on the National Institute's Web site at: http://www.edc.org/urban.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
URBAN SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

Center for Program Improvement
University of Colorado at Denver
1380 Lawrence Street, 6th Floor
Denver, CO 80202
Tel: (303) 556-3990
Fax: (303) 556-6142
TTY or TDD: (800) 659-2656

Center for Research Synthesis and Product Development
University of Oregon
1235 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1235
Tel: (541) 346-2888
Fax: (541) 346-2471
TTY: (541) 346-2487

Center for Marketing, Networking, and Utilization
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02458
Tel: (617) 969-7100, ext. 2105
Fax: (617) 969-3440
TTY: (617) 964-5448

E-mail: niusi@edc.org
http://www.edc.org/urban

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H086C70005